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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 000908

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: SENATORS MCCAIN AND GRAHAM MEET NEW CANADIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: Scott Bellard, reasons, 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting on June 20, new Foreign Minister Emerson welcomed Senators McCain and Graham and Ambassador Wilkins to Ottawa, and emphasized progress Canada's Conservative government had made on re-equipping and enlarging the Canadian Forces (CF) as well as the political support the government had engineered in order to sustain the CF deployment to Afghanistan through 2011. Emerson expressed growing concerns by the flow of fighters and materiel from Pakistan to Afghanistan. End summary

Rebuilding Canada's Armed Forces

¶2. (C) During a June 20 visit to Ottawa during which Senator John McCain made a widely publicized speech to the Economic Club of Toronto and separately met with prominent business executives along with Senator Lindsey Graham, the two Senators called on new Minister of Foreign Affairs David Emerson in his Parliamentary office, accompanied by Ambassador Wilkins. (Septel will cover their meeting with outgoing Chief of National Defence General Rick Hillier.) FM Emerson asserted that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government was proud of its role in rebuilding the Canadian Forces after over a decade of neglect at the hands of previous governments. The Conservatives had and would continue to invest in recruiting soldiers for Canada's growing military and in equipping and training them, he insisted. The CF had already bought four C-17 aircraft, he noted, and was in the process of procuring replacement fleets of 16 C-130s and 17 CH-47s. With an eye on the Arctic, he said, Canada was also rebuilding and procuring naval assets. But the government's top, long-term priority was to re-make Canada into a "mature" and reliable security and defense partner of the U.S. and Canada's other NATO allies.

Afghanistan

¶3. (C) Responding to Senator McCain's query about Canadian stay-power in Afghanistan, Emerson said that there was adequate bipartisan political support for the Afghanistan mission in Canada, but that this support had come at the price of pegging 2011 as the end of Canada's military presence in Kandahar. Senator Graham asked if 2011 was a "hard date," and Emerson responded that the government was treating it as such. Canada's greater focus on bolstering Afghan security force capability, reconstruction and development, humanitarian programs, and the policing of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border were all linked to the effort to increase public support in Canada, Emerson added.

¶4. (C) Emerson expressed Canada's appreciation for U.S. efforts to help Canada procure and quickly deploy helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), as well as for the current and future deployments of U.S. troops to ISAF Regional Command South (RC-S) and, specifically, to Kandahar. The troops collaborate closely, he noted, allowing the U.S. and Canada to "leverage" their work. Turning from Kandahar to Kabul, Emerson observed that donor governments would have to turn up the pressure on President Karzai to rein in rampant corruption in order, again, to maintain public support for the mission in Canada and other ISAF member states. Senators McCain and Graham remarked that the Afghan Qstates. Senators McCain and Graham remarked that the Afghan Attorney General seemed to be honest, hard working, and therefore worthy of allied support. Emerson said he had not yet met the man, but would look forward to doing so.

Pakistan

¶5. (C) Senator McCain welcomed President Sarkozy's decision to deploy French troops to ISAF's Regional Command East (RC-E) near Pakistan. Emerson agreed that France's move was good, but added that Canada was preoccupied by the need to staunch the flow of fighters and materiel from Pakistan to Afghanistan mostly through RC-E and RC-S. This flow had become the "Achilles heel" of the mission, he remarked, and all signs indicated that dealing with the Pakistan government would likely become even more demanding with time. Senator McCain said he shared Emerson's concerns about Pakistan, particularly the deals the new government was cutting with militants in the FATA, as they were "headed towards failure."

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Hopefully, he said, the Government of Pakistan would come to that realization and adjust course in the near future. Minister Emerson agreed with Senator McCain's assessment.

¶6. (U) Senators McCain and Graham did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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WILKINS